

H. Gray (R. H. H.)

NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE,

LETTER

Written in the Year

MDCCXCII.

*The contents of my letters being
 very much misrepresented, and many
 false reports propagated, respecting
 their tendency, induces me to print a
 few copies of the whole correspondence,
 for the true information of those persons
 concerned in spreading and receiving
 such reports.*

ROBERT GREY.



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L E T T E R I.

FROM Mr ROB. GREY TO Mr JOS. COWNLEY.

DEAR SIR,

BEING informed you intend to administer the Lord's Supper, in the Methodist Preaching-house, at Byker, to-morrow, I take the liberty to express my sentiments on the subject.

You have been for many years preaching the Gospel of the Grace of God among us, were I, in the smallest degree, attempting to throw any obstacle in your way of publishing the glad tidings of Salvation, I should certainly incur the displeasure of, and be justly charged with opposing God.

But I am well satisfied that the preaching of the word, and the administering of Sacraments, are materially different, and am therefore in no fear of incurring fault, by expostulating a little with you on this account.

I believe there may be an essential difference between two persons who take upon them to preach, each hath full liberty in the pulpit to deliver his own sentiments, every thing he advances may be according to his own imagination, he may speak "all the words of this life," or he may "corrupt the word of God," and endanger the salvation of the hearers. But the case is quite different in the Sacrament. This consists of two parts, the Outward Visible Sign, and the Inward Spiritual Grace. The former is all that the Minister can give: the bread and wine, and the form of administration can be equally as well given and performed by the one person as by the other, neither of them hath it in his power to substitute any thing beside; and these two considerations are sufficient to prove, that the same necessity does not exist in both cases; my salvation may be endangered by hearing some men preach, but I cannot

not possibly receive the least hurt (if it be not my own fault) by receiving the consecrated elements from any man's hands who has the outward call, for the ordinance is effectual to every one, who by faith and rightly do receive, because of Christ's institution and promise. I may every Sunday eat of that bread, and drink of that cup, and receive the same from the hands of the most holy Minister of Christ, that ever lived, and never be a partaker of the inward part or thing signified, (this the great High Priest of our profession hath reserved in his own power to impart) nay I may eat and drink damnation to myself, not discerning the Lord's body; and on the other hand, I may never receive the outward part or sign, and yet every day spiritually eat the flesh and drink the blood of the Son of man. The inference, therefore, is strong and conclusive, that the necessity of preaching the pure word of God, and of administering the Sacraments, is essentially different.

Dear Sir, I believe you to have been engaged in the Methodist cause well nigh from the beginning of the work, perfectly acquainted with the principles, and well read in the writings of Mr Wesley; you have served him as a son in the Gospel, you well know that preaching of the pure word of God is essentially necessary to the very existence of Methodism; you are equally well know that it doth in no wise depend upon the Administration of Sacraments, it hath subsisted fifty years without this; you well know Mr Wesley hath declared over and over, that it is the peculiar glory of the people called Methodists, that they will not become a distinct body, that he declares whatever is done respecting America or Scotland, it hath no concern with England, and that to separate from the Church is totally a distinct case, that the preachers' connection with him hath no other authority than to do that part of the work which he appointed, and only in the places where he appointed, and earnestly entreats them, to contain themselves within their bounds, to be content with preaching the Gospel, and proclaiming to all the world the loving kindness of our Saviour, declaring to all, the kingdom of God

at hand, repent ye and believe the Gospel, earnestly advises you to abide in your place, keep your station, not superseding, but provoking to jealousy the ordinary messengers, pathetically exclaiming, "In God's name stop there, both by your preaching and example provoke them to love and to good works; ye are a new phænomenon on the earth; a body of people, who being of no sect or party are friends to all parties, and endeavour to forward all in heart religion, in the knowledge and love of God and man. Ye yourselves were first called in the Church of England, and though ye have and will have a thousand temptations to leave it and set up for yourselves, regard them not. Be Church of England men still. Do not cast away the peculiar glory which God hath put upon you, and frustrate the design of Providence, the very end for which God raised you up."

Oh, Sir, is it possible for you, while Newcastle Orphan-house is still cloathed with the emblems of mourning, a tribute paid to his memory, to run counter, directly counter, to this earnest exhortation, given by himself, within the two last years of his life, which you actually do, to all intents and purposes, if you persist administering the Sacraments of Baptism, and the Supper of the Lord.

But if the earnest exhortation and entreaties of Mr Wesley hath no influence upon you, I have still one word more to sound in your ear, and God grant it may reach your heart, and that is, whether you will sustain the character of an honest man, or falsify your most solemn engagement. You are a member of the Methodist Conference, and was present at that last meeting, and Mr Guaktier spoke true, when he declared to New-
 the Society, that that body had agreed, that every
 ing should continue the same as it was at the time of
 the death of Mr Wesley. I leave it with your con-
 science to find a name bad enough to brand your pro-
 ceedings with,

AM, DEAR SIR,

Your much grieved friend and servant,

ROB. GREY.

White Cross, Sat. morning, 7th Jan. 1792.

L E T T E R II.

FROM Mr JOS. COWNLEY TO Mr ROB. GREY,

MY DEAR FRIEND,

TOUCHING the essentials of religion, I imagine we differ very little, if at all. With respect to the circumstantial of it, we do, and we cannot help it, for I cannot make you see with my eyes, neither can you make me see with yours.

If I understand you aright, you suppose a man may be call'd to administer the christian Sacraments, who is not call'd to preach the Gospel of the Grace of God, and that a man may be call'd to preach that Gospel, without being call'd to administer the Sacraments of it. Here we differ, for I believe he never calls a man to do the one, that he does not authorize to do the other,* though according to St. Paul's judgment, the preaching the Gospel is the greatest part of the Ministerial office. When the Head of the Church commissioned his first Disciples to go and preach his Gospel to all nations, he, at the same time, bad them to baptize, as well as preach, and to teach the people whatsoever he had commanded them, and before that he had commanded them, when they represented the whole christian church, to commemorate his death, by eating bread, and drinking in remembrance of him. At our last conference we agreed to follow the plan our venerable father had left us as nearly as we could and not to form ourselves into a distinct body; and this I gave my assent, though had it then been asked me will you never Administer the Sacraments to our Dis-

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* If this opinion prevails, what disorders, it is to be feared, will ensue from those *Rog Lads*, who, professing to have a call from God to preach; are on that account, received as local preachers, and scattered around the country.

enting Brethren, and to others who scruple to receive them at their own parish churches? I would have said, No, I'll promise no such thing, for at that time, I knew that one of our brethren had for several years past, who had been ordained by Mr Wesley, administered the Lord's Supper, in several parts of the kingdom, where the people desired it, and that he did this with Mr Wesley's knowledge, who did not forbid him, nor suffer any censure to be past upon him for it. Besides, when he ordain'd me, he put this question to me, when was upon my knees before God and him, "Will you give, faithful diligence *always*, so to minister the Doctrine and Sacraments, and discipline of Christ, as he hath commanded" (N. B. Nothing was said to me, either before, or at, or after my ordination, about doing the same in Scotland only) to which question I was required to answer (and I did it with all my heart) "I will do so by the help of the Lord." Where will my honesty be then toward God and man, if, in compliance with the will of some of my friends, I pay no regard to this solemn promise, will they answer to God for me for the breach of it?

My dear friend, you are not required to deviate, in the least, from the way you judge to be the best; no one pretends to lord it over your conscience; and will you not give to others, what you justly claim for yourself. Surely we may and ought in things not absolutely necessary to salvation, to think and let think, and agree people to disagree.

Withing you and yours, every blessing obtained to us by the blood of the Cross,

I REMAIN,

Your affectionate friend and servant,

Tuesday morning.

J. COWNLEY.

L E T T E R II.

FROM Mr JOS. COWNLEY TO Mr ROB. GREY,

MY DEAR FRIEND,

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Your affectionate friend and servant,

Tuesday morning.

J. COWNLEY.

L E T T E R III.

FROM MR ROB. GREY TO JOS. COWNLEY,

DEAR SIR,

I AM much obliged to you for your answer to mine of the 7th inst. but must confess myself a little surprized that you misunderstand my distinction between the preaching of the word, and the administration of Sacraments. The difference I make is, that in preaching, no restraint being laid upon the speaker, he delivers his own sentiments, and may either dispense the pure word of God, or corrupt the same, and so, either set forward or endanger the salvation of the hearers. But with respect to the Sacraments, he hath no such power; he can only give the outward part, water in baptism, and bread and wine in the Lord's Supper; he dare substitute nothing in their stead, and therefore no such danger can be sustained, which certainly proves the inference I made, That the necessity of preaching the pure word of God, and of administering Sacraments is essentially different; my intention herein was to remind you, that when you are engaged in preaching, you are establishing Methodism, but your administration of Sacraments is not necessary thereto. Your opinion, that God never calls a man to preach, but he also authorises him to administer the Sacraments, is a subject I did not touch upon, but as you have brought it forward, it may not be amiss to speak a word thereto.

In respect, dear Sir, to your own particular call from God, I rest that with your own conscience. I doubt not but you are satisfied of its reality with regard to preaching, whether you are equally clear with regard to administering Sacraments I cannot determine, but must think if the call to both was equally clear, you have acted very inconsistently for forty years together

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however, sure I am, that all the accounts given by other preachers in the connection, that ever came within my reading, do not contain the least hint of any one of them supposing himself called to any thing more than to preach the Gospel. I know also Mr Wesley's judgment of this matter was different to yours; and I think his opinion is countenanced by St. Paul, who says, "Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the Gospel."

However, if you really believe God called you, in the beginning of this work, both to preach and to administer Sacraments, what further need of man's ordination; you have frequently, in the course of your preaching, ridiculed this, affirming God only hath power to do this, and never gives it to any man. It is an unpleasant task for me to enter on this subject, I could wish to draw a veil over it. Mr Wesley, taking upon himself to ordain men, is the darkest shade in his character, you may think it your glory, but it is his disgrace.

You have been pleased to give me more light into this business, than I ever got before. Instead of its being performed in the face of the congregation, them joining in prayer to God for his blessing on the undertaking, and a suitable sermon on the occasion, as is the practice, both in the Episcopal and Presbyter manner, it was done in a corner, in the dark, secretly, as by stealth, so that the time is scarce known, only it was before your memorable mission to Scotland. That the ordination he conferred was intended for America and Scotland, and not to be exercised in England; he hath, in his subsequent writings, proved, beyond a doubt, and as you do not attempt to controvert my former observations on this head, and the short abstract I gave of his own works, it remains in full force.

You have told me, that when Mr Wesley ordained you, he put this question to you, when you were upon your knees before God and him, "Will you give faithful diligence always, so to minister the doctrine and Sacraments and discipline of Christ, as he hath commanded;" and then with a N. B. least I should overlook this worthy remark, "Nothing was said to me, either before, or at, or after my ordination, about doing the same in Scotland only, to which question
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" I was required to answer, (and I did it with all my heart) I will do so by the help of the Lord. Where will my honesty be then towards God and man, if, in compliance with the will of some of my friends," (enemies rather) " I pay no regard to this solemn promise, will they answer to God for me for the breach of it." Well, here has been some solemn work too. Let us see what becomes of it.

Thus commissioned, you go to Scotland, and I believe continued there between one and two years, very little hath been said of the success of your labours.—Mr Collins desired Newcastle Society to pray for you, observing you was well nigh forsaken of all, and sitting like a sparrow alone on the house top, you returned to Newcastle, I think early in 1790, and remained quiet. It doth not appear that your ordination promise troubled you, but you contented yourself with preaching, as had been customary with you before that time. Mr Wesley finished his mortal pilgrimage, 2d March, 1791. Conference met, I think, the latter end of July following, you are a member of that body, and took your seat accordingly.

Now, Sir, you have said, you believe God never calls a man to preach, that he doth not authorise to administer the Sacraments; you have given an account of the solemn work of your ordination, and it would seem it lies with great weight upon your conscience; you seem to believe, you are equally bound to the performance of these solemn calls and promises in England, as much as in any other part of the world. It may reasonably be expected, that you go to conference deeply impressed with these sentiments, and determined not to give your assent to any decree contrary to these principles. But what part do you now act. It is here proposed, " to follow the plan Mr Wesley has left us as nearly as we can, and not to form ourselves into a distinct body. Is not this entirely opposite to your supposed call of God forty or fifty years ago, to the solemn ordination work, and to the reproaches of your conscience. If therefore you had acted the honest man, would you not have made a full declaration of your principles, and withheld your assent. But not a jot of this appears, but

this large and solemn assembly, without fear or shame, either of God or man, you establish the decree. And yet with an aggravation of guilt scarcely to be equalled, do it with a secret reserve, because questions, of a particular nature, was not asked of you. What construction can any honest man put upon the words of that assent, but that as you had laboured so great a number of years in Newcastle circuit, and never once administered the Lord's Supper, you now engaged not to do so the ensuing year, for it is a mere squib to tug in the word NEVER. You know the orders of conference are annual, not like the laws of the Medes and Persians. And yet the worst is still behind, notwithstanding all this, in a few months time, this last engagement is wilfully broken and set aside, yea swept away like a cobweb. Oh, what a scene appears, an old man, standing on the borders of eternity, playing this double game, shuffling and prevaricating in the most solemn concerns. I ask, where is conscience now? where is the honest man? you have in compliance with the will of some of your friends, paid no regard to your most solemn promises. Let those friends come forth and answer, if not to God, at least to man, you never before had so much need of them. The charge is brought home. Let conscience speak, do you sustain the character of an honest man, or falsify your most solemn engagement. Indeed, Sir, you have given me more advantage against you than I will take. I will not shirk it—I spare you.

But what is the end designed by all this breach of faith, is a point deserving serious consideration. If many souls be removed and much good procured, although fair and base means be used in the accomplishing, it may be thought no great harm. Is then the safety of the Methodist cause at stake? Are we holding as leading principles what is contrary to the oracles of God? Are our doctrines and discipline repugnant to reason and scripture, and is it intended to bring in a more perfect standard of faith and holiness? Alas, all that is sounded in our ears by this mighty change, is, different hours of service, the Prayer Book, Water Baptism, the celebration of the Lord's Supper,—ay,—and I had almost for-

forgot the principal end, the Preacher to wear the Band the Cassock, and the Gown, and to be called Rev. Sir.— It is yet not given out that your baptizing is any more than sprinkling of water; it is not said that the Holy Ghost is given by your hands; but I remember in your famous reply to the Hull letter, you talk of feeding souls with the sacred symbols of the body and blood of him, who hath said, Do this in remembrance of me, but this does not go far enough, my soul cannot feed on symbols. But dear Sir, I will bring the matter to a short issue: I said before, the Lord's Supper is of two parts, the outward is Bread and Wine, this feeds my body; the inward is the Body and Blood of Christ, this strengthens and refreshes my soul. Now, if my dear friend, Joseph Cownley, and you may call to your assistance, Charles Atmore, will give me these two parts of this Sacrament (the one part I can get at every Church in town) I promise, on the word of an honest man, I will read my recantation, make all dutiful submission, and by every means in my power, set forth your excellence, and aggrandize your names.

But to be serious, it may perhaps be said, if I allow no such danger can be sustained in the Administration of Sacraments, as in Preaching, why do I contend strenuously against them being introduced? why, because the bringing them in, is the very thing that constitutes us a distinct body. I in no wise speak slightly of Sacraments; I reverence them as the ordinances of Christ, but I contend that all the benefits of their institution are as fully enjoyed by our continuing to partake of them in the accustomed manner we have done from the beginning, as by having them in our preaching houses, and as this makes the great change, I am anxious that the old Methodist plan be preserved, that we may not cast away the peculiar glory which God hath put upon us.

In answer to the conclusion of your letter, "will I give to others, what I justly claim for myself," I answer without the least equivocation, I will, I do. And hath been our boast and glory from the beginning, that having no terms of admittance among us, but only a real desire to save our souls; and having our ser-

to simple, free of all creeds, confessions of faith, &c. and consisting only of preaching, prayer, and praise, and at such times as not to interfere with other worshiping assemblies; so that persons of every denomination may join with us, and yet be at liberty to attend their former Communion, I contend answers the true import of the phrase justly claim; and that it is inconsistent with justice to bring in such alterations as must necessarily deprive the members of the liberty they before possessed of joining with both communities.

I AM, DEAR SIR,

Your most humble servant,

ROB. GREY.

White Cross, Sat. Even. Jan. 14, 1792.

L E T T E R IV.

FROM Mr ALEX. KILHAM TO Mr ROB. GREY.

DEAR SIR,

AS Mr Cownley is much fatigued after his journey, and is going out of town on Satterday, I have taken the liberty of answering your letter. It is necessary, in the first place, to inform you, that all your charges against Mr Cownley's moral character, fall to the ground, when it is considered, he did not in the least prevaricate in sanctioning what you call the decrees of conference. It was fixed in conference, as I told you the other day, that the plan should be taken up as Mr Wesley left it, without making any particular alterations; and if any preacher chose to act contrary to that plan, he should be accountable to the next conference

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ference for his conduct. Mr Cownley has gone contrary to the plan, and is to give an account of himself to the preachers when they shall meet again. Mr Cownley has not gone from his word, or in the least violated his conscience in what he has done. It appears strange to me, how you could lay so many heavy things to his charge, and at the same time, declare you spared him. You charge him with dissimulation, with acting in a double game, with prevaricating, with bringing great guilt on his conscience, &c. What can be more heavy than these charges? If you had been influenced by the charity that thinketh no evil, you could not have given loose to your pen as you have done. You know in your conscience Mr Cownley has been an ornament to this Society, and to the connection at large, both as a christian, and a minister of the Gospel, for many years. There are thousands in this neighbourhood who have known him to adorn the Gospel of Christ. I hope you will retract your charges, and own you wrote in too warm a spirit. What you say on the Sacrament, in both your letters, is very curious. You suppose the ordinance is the same, whether a good man, or a sinner administer it. You observe a man may corrupt the word of God, but cannot alter the Sacraments; provided he keep to the form of Administration prescribed in the Church. But can you prove that a wicked man is called of God to preach the Gospel? Does God appoint such men to administer the Sacraments? Are they acting according to his will in what they do? It is easy to prove from the word of God, and from the doctrines of the Church of England, that no unconverted man has any call to any part of the work of the ministry. If he preach or administer the Sacrament, he intrudes upon a work which is not designed for him by his God. He is sinning against his Maker by this intrusion. It is exceedingly offensive to God for a person of this character to presume on such sacred work. He goes against the express word of God in what he does. If a Minister be pious himself, he has no authority from God, to give the Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ, promiscuously to all who shall approach the sacred Table.

St. Paul forbids our eating in private with a man who is called a brother, who is a fornicator, &c. Now, Sir, if you call yourself a member of the Church of England, every time you receive the Sacrament from the hand of a wicked Minister, and with such as are open transgressors, you go directly against the word of this Apostle. St. John forbids our wishing good speed to ungodly Ministers. If your attending on their sermons, and receiving the Sacrament from them, &c. does not amount to what St. John forbids, I am a good deal mistaken. I am led to suppose you act contrary to the direction of that Apostle, in your attending the ordinances of the Church. If you were starving for want of refreshment, and one of the worst of men should administer bread and wine for your relief, there would be nothing contrary to the word of God, or the dictates of reason in your receiving it at his hands: but when bread and wine, are, by the appointment of God, to be given as a Sacrament, then we are called to receive them in the way our Master and Head directs. He has forbidden sinners entering on any part of the work of the Ministry, and in consequence of this, we have no right to receive at their hands. We have no authority from God to receive it, when unduly administered. What Mr Wesley, or others have said to prove the lawfulness of christians going among sinners, cannot satisfy the minds of those who take the Bible for the rule of their faith and practice. I believe it is out of your power, or the power of any man living, to justify, by scripture and sound reason, the conduct of Methodists receiving the Sacrament from wicked Ministers, in the company of sinners, when they have men like Mr Cownley to give it to them in their own Chapels. I beg you will not get over this by reproaching me, and my brethren, who think as I do, by being enemies to Mr Wesley and Methodism. We take the Bible for our rule, and are ready, from the word of truth, to justify what we hold before all the world. We have only your word to prove the following expressions: " All benefits of their institution, (the Sacraments) are as fully enjoyed by our continuing to partake of them in the accustomed manner we have done from the beginning, as by having them in our

“preaching houses.” Most of our people who receive the Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper in the Church, receive it from unconverted men, among the worst of sinners. They receive it contrary to the plain word of God, and contrary to the doctrines of the Church. If the Methodists in Newcastle received it from Mr Cownley, it would be more agreeable to the word of God; more consistent with the dictates of enlightened reason, and greatly to the satisfaction of the greatest part of our friends, we might expect the Lord would graciously own us, while engaged in his worship according to the direction of the word; and the benefits communicated from the spirit of the Lord, we have reason to suppose would be unspeakable. Though we are not professionally a distinct body of people, are we not in reality as distinct as any body of people in the nation? Perhaps what you call the glory of Methodism, if properly examined, would not be found so. Is it our glory to countenance ungodly Ministers, and communicate with sinners? Is it our glory to oppose the word of God, and do violence to our own reason? Is it our glory to oppose those who will not join with us in attending the service of the Church, as enemies to the interests of Methodism? Is it our glory to follow Mr Wesley, or any other men, implicitly, without being authorized to do it from the word of God? We are thankful to God for causing the door of our Church to be open to all of every denomination, and for suffering those who are connected with us to worship God according to their own conscience. But when a number of serious people in our Societies wish to have the Sacrament from the hands of their own Preachers, and are determined to have it no where else, you call this innovation, and look on yourselves as injured, because those friends of the Son of God, are gratified in their desire, by a faithful Minister of the Gospel.

Mr Wesley, according to what we can learn from the Bible, had as much right from God to ordain Preachers in his connection, to administer the Sacraments, as any man ever had since the days of the Apostles. He was led by Providence to exercise that power, according to the appointment of God. It has been attended with

good to many souls in various places. If the prejudices of our people would submit to it, in every Society in the kingdom, it might be attended with the greatest good; and where a majority of the leaders and people are earnestly desirous of having the Sacrament among themselves, there can be no crime committed, if those who wish to receive, are blessed with what they desire; especially if those who do not agree with them, are at liberty to go to church as usual. You was a little mistaken, when you declared the manner of Mr Wesley's ordaining, was contrary to the practice of the Church. The Bishops of the Church in England, frequently ordain Ministers as privately as Mr Wesley ordained Mr Cownley. There was no need for Mr Wesley to do it publicly, as Mr Cownley was going to supply the Churches of Scotland. You are also mistaken when you say, Mr Wesley only ordained for Scotland and America. There are several Preachers ordained, who were never questioned where they should exercise their Ministry. Had Mr Wesley a power to restrict any person whom he ordained in the exercise of his work? What Mr Cownley promised, on his knees, before God and Mr Wesley, intimates the contrary. What you observe respecting the end of ordination; its being designed to furnish the preacher with a gown, &c. is quite a mistake; many of the Preachers would not, on any account whatever, appear canonically, if they were ordained. And those who submitted to this, would not place any confidence in their apparel, or expect any particular blessing to attend their Ministry on account of it.

As you have taken liberty to disclose your mind freely to Mr Cownley, I hope you will not think me impertinent, if I tell you a little of mine in return. I fear, Sir, you have lost your first love. My fears are grounded on your being so easily offended; on your reproaching those who act agreeable to the word of God, and for the honour of his cause; on your turning your back of the connection, because you cannot have your own will. Your zeal does not appear to be for the glory of God, and the interests of the Redeemer, but for what you call old Methodism. If you would try old Methodism, as you call it, by the law and testimony, you would find it is

probable, many things that ought to be expunged out of it. I am afraid your great attachment to the Church is only a specious conformity to the world. It is a more honourable way to attend service at Church, than to be Dissenters of any denomination. It also takes away the reproach which attends non-conformity. It is attended with other advantages. You have not treated Mr Cownley with that respect which is due to his character. You have laid many things to his charge, which you cannot prove. You have shown great bitterness and contempt in your charges against him. Your conduct in this is contrary to the spirit of the Gospel. It does not appear that your having been a member of the Society for so many years, has answered the end designed. You have been diligent in the outward means, but by the spirit you discover we have reason to suppose your will is not yet brought to comply with the will of God. It is not to the honour of any person to have continued a member of the Society for upwards of forty years, and have yet to learn to be meek and lowly of heart before God. I hope you will not resent what I have said because of my youth. Examine yourself by the touchstone of the word of God. If you find your heart unwilling to bow to the yoke of the Redeemer, plead with God to bring you to submit to his will in all things. I have written from the fulness of my heart, with a single eye to the glory of God in your advantage: if you resent what I have said, I will bear it as part of the cross designed for me by the Lord Jesus. If you look on me as acting out of my place, by replying to your letter in the place of Mr Cownley. I am one of his friends who you call forth to his help, and wish to vindicate his character from the reproach and calumny you have poured upon it, I am enquiring after truth, and am determined to embrace it according to my knowledge at the hands of any person who stands forth to administer it. If you can convince me from the word of God and from reason founded upon it, that you are in the right, and we are acting contrary to it, I solemnly promise in the sight of God, that your arguments shall determine my judgment and influence my practice. If you wish to establish your notions by their antiquity

and the writings of Mr Wesley, and leave the word of God out of the question, I shall be constrained to oppose what you advance. You know, my dear Sir, "the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God." Before you reply, weigh our arguments. Forget what you have held yourself for a moment, that you may judge properly on the subject in debate. In your reply, let truth be the foundation on which you build; never forget the law and the testimony; do not load your opponent with reproaches, but treat him as a man, and as a christian. You will find it best for your own mind, to answer in the spirit of meekness and love; it will be more for the glory of God, and the honour of your character, than answering in any other way. Unless you are exceeding severe, I shall look on it my duty to reply in the same spirit I recommend; but should you treat Mr Cownley and his friends in the same manner you have done in your last, it may be necessary to sharpen the sword of truth, and make ready the arrows of conviction, to do that execution which milder reasons will not accomplish. Any thing you advance against what I have maintained in this letter, shall be carefully attended to. If I be in the way when your answer comes, you may depend on having my sentiments as soon as possible. Humbly intreating the Lord to bless and help you.

I AM, DEAR SIR,

Your affectionate servant, in the Gospel of Christ,

ALEXANDER KILHAM.

Orphan-House, 19th of Jan. 1792.

P. S. I have answered your letter by Mr Cownley's desire.

LETTER

L E T T E R V.

FROM Mr ROB. GREY TO Mr ALEX. KILHAM.

DEAR SIR,

I HAVE, under Mr Cownley's own hand, a sufficient foundation to support the charge I have brought home to his conscience. I have done it privately between him and myself alone. I leave it there, and shall not retract one item.

In respect to your verbose letter, it consisting almost entirely of dogmatical assertions, unsupported either by reason or scripture, I let it remain just as I find it. It will do me neither good or hurt. I shall speak a word to the two passages of scripture you quote.

First, you say, "St. Paul forbids our eating in private with a man who is called a brother, who is a fornicator, &c." *Eating in private*, well, be it so, but "this is not to eat the Lord's Supper." So all you advance from this text, falls to the ground at once.

Secondly, you say "St. John forbids our wishing good speed to ungodly Ministers." His words are "Whosoever transgresseth and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed. For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds." Now Sir, suppose, the phrase, "the doctrine of Christ," cannot be better explained than by our Lord's first words, the beginning of his Ministry, "Repent ye, and believe the Gospel." Now Sir, I am bold to tell you, what you do not seem to know, that I attend on no Ministers who do not preach Repentance, Faith, and Obedience; therefore all you advance from this text also, is at aunder at one stroke.

The "worst of sinners," I still believe, as I observed on a former occasion, blaspheme the Holy Ghost, dis-
pising the atonement of the Lord Jesus. These persons have no concern with, I eat not with them; therefore all your heavy charge on this head, vanishes into air.

The texts of scripture concerning the receiving of the Lord's Supper are few. The Evangelists gives us the account of its first institution, and our Saviour's command, "This do in remembrance of me." Also his pathetic exclamation, "Behold, the hand of him that betrayeth me, is with me on the Table," but nothing said about the qualifications of minister or people.

The Apostle Paul, in his first Epistle to the Corinthians, gives us the fullest account we have in scripture, and he speaks home and plain to every particular person; but here likewise no mention is made of any danger that can be sustained on account of the persons we receive with.

After all the pother you have raised about the un-
lawfulness of receiving from wicked Ministers in the company of the worst of sinners. I reply with stead-
fastness, though devoid of obstinacy. I receive the Lord's Supper from those Ministers who preach repen-
tance, faith, and good works, in company with sinners who ground their hopes of salvation on the atonement of the Lord Jesus; and am fully persuaded I enjoy all the benefits of this sacred institution.

Dear Sir, I advise you, instead of judging and con-
demning others, and presumptuously ascribing to your-
selves the character of friends of the Son of God. You seriously consider these solemn words, "And I say unto you that many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of Heaven. But the children of the kingdom, shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

I AM, Your humble servant,

ROB. GREY.

White-Cross, Sat. Even. Jan. 21, 1792.

LETTER

L E T T E R VI.

FROM MR ALEX. KILHAM TO ROBERT GREY.

DEAR SIR,

I HAVE seen a copy of the letter Mr Cownley sent to you. I am sure it is out of your power to prove from that letter the charges you have brought against him. I have proved in my last, that Mr Cownley is not guilty of any of those charges. You have not invalidated what I said. If you had under his hand what proved your assertion, why did you not produce it to justify your conduct. I am sure you have not authority from what he wrote in the letter referred to, to charge him with any thing criminal. Till you produce good authority to ground your charge upon, we must look on you as robbing one of the best of men of his character.

How easy is it for you to answer the most known argument? You have got over my "verbose letter, consisting of dogmatical, unsupported assertions either by reason or scripture," in a very easy manner. If you will look at the letter again, you will find several things supported by reason, and I hope by scripture, which would require you some trouble to answer. You ought to have shown the unreasonableness of my dogmatical assertions and exposed them, but this you could not do, they stand unshaken. I only beg you to consider them as they are found in the letter, and then I am persuaded you will expose yourself in exposing them. I mean you will expose your want of argument and scripture, invalidate what I have advanced. I shall be under the necessity of supposing you dare not consider them to give your sentiments upon them if you bury them in future as you have done now. How easy is it to maintain one's own sentiments, and answer what an opponent says, if we take the example you have given us in this passage

You have shown your extraordinary penetration on Paul's words. You overturn all I said on that passage, by observing St. Paul forbid their eating in private, not their receiving the Sacrament with them. According to your explanation of this passage, we are to receive the fallen brother in private, not suffering ourselves to eat with him, and notwithstanding this, we may give him the right hand of fellowship at the Lord's Supper; we always supposed if we were to shun a man in private, he ought to be avoided at the Lord's Table; but by your explanation of the matter, we find we have been wrong. Do you suppose, Sir, that any man but yourself will believe your comment on that text.

The other passage from St. John, has much the same application. The Apostle bids us countenance those who abide in the doctrine of the Father and the Son. Do you think that the Apostle only means preaching the doctrine of the Father and the Son, is not the person influenced by this doctrine in his life and conversation, can any man be said to abide in the doctrine of Christ, who lives in rebellion against God. A man who reads repentance, faith, obedience every Sunday, who shows a want of each of these doctrines in his walk before God. You might teach a parrot to repeat the solemn truths in religion, but you could not get a little creature to abide in the doctrine of the Father and the Son. Unless a Minister preach repentance, faith, and obedience in his life and conversation, what he declares from the pulpit will avail nothing. If the Ministers where you attend preach up these doctrines, and if our people have not the privilege of sitting under such a ministry. One of our friends in this town, who is as much attached to the church as you are, told me that a clergyman in Newcastle, who bears a good moral character, would one Sunday preach up repentance, faith, and obedience, he would speak upon our sins forgiven, and this known in our own breast, would be warmly for inspiration; and the next Sunday he would preach as contrary to this as light and darkness are opposite to each other. If you mean by preaching these doctrines, sometimes naming them in a sermon, I am of your sentiment, but if you mean explaining these doctrines, and

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inforcing them on the hearers, never in the least deviating from them, I beg to think different from you. I repeat it again, if you can hear sermons from unconverted Ministers, and receive the Sacrament with persons of the same character, I cannot but think you are bidding "God speed" to those whom you ought not to countenance.

What you observe on the worst of sinners is curious, and your having none of that character with you at the Lord's Table, remains to be proved. When a Minister declares before the Bishop he is moved by the Holy Ghost to take on him the office of the Ministry, and shews both before and after his ordination, he is moved by the prospect of a good living; is not coming near to the blasphemy of the Holy Ghost; while a Minister and Communicants deny inspiration, and trample under foot the merits of the Redeemer; though it may not amount to blasphemy against the Holy Ghost in the fullest sense of the word, nor amount to a denial of the atonement of Christ, yet the sin is exceeding great in the sight of God. But my dear Sir, are there no other great sinners but these; is not a man who blasphemes the name of God, who lives in open drunkenness, who is a fornicator or adulterer, who lies against his own conscience, &c. Is not a person of this character a great sinner? And are there no persons of this description with you when you receive the Sacrament in Church. I cannot think what I have said on this subject vanishes into air, unless you can prove the sinners I have named are not great sinners, or that none of this description communicate with you. It is probable the moral character of Judas, in the sight of the Disciples and the world, was as good as any of the Disciples. He was called to his office by the Son of God, and was sent out to preach and cast out devils. It is probable he was both, and was not known to be a traitor, till after the Supper was finished. It is probable he was formerly a time pious, but after that fell from his steadfastness, and was not known to be an enemy to his master, till he went out and sold him. Now, Sir, as none of the Disciples, by what we can learn from the scriptures, were Judas to be a traitor, you cannot ground upon

passage the lawfulness of ungodly Ministers, and people communicating together. The history gives us an example how we should act. We should assemble at the Communion, with none but those who profess to love the Lord Jesus; who are his Disciples separated from the rest of the world, and who shew this in their conduct and behaviour. If there be a Judas among these, who discovers himself after receiving, he is to be cut off, and another, if one be wanted, to be chosen and to fill this place; this is all we contend for and desire.

I think St. Paul in his Epistle to the Corinthians, gives us to understand, we ought to be separate from sinners in receiving the Sacrament. We should be with people who are pious followers of the Son of God, and shew this in their life and conversation. It is easy to gather from what he says, that sinners ought not to communicate while their lives are immoral. All things should be done decently and in order. You cannot from that passage conclude, that it is lawful for you to attend the Communion of the Body and Blood of Christ, with those who are openly prophane. Your charity seems extensive, you suppose your Ministers men of God, and those who communicate with you grounding their hopes of salvation on the atonement of Christ; perhaps you do not see them commit any thing that is criminal, and it is probable you will not believe any thing on this subject but what you see yourself. If this arises from the love that thinketh no evil it is well, but if it arises from a determination to justify, right or wrong, your sentiments, we cannot suppose your charity, proceeds from God. If you had viewed Mr. Cownley in this light, you would not have brought the charges against him which you have done.

Our Lord says, "by their fruits ye shall know them." I think it is not "judging and condemning," to suppose a man a sinner, when he curses and swears in our hearing, when he is so drunk in our sight as to prevent him from walking without a guide. I hope we can look on ourselves in some measure to be friends of the Son of God without presumption. We are conscious we might be more so, were we more given up to him in heart and soul. We are thankful for the text you have given

us in the close of your letter, I hope you will consider it yourselves.

If you are disposed to continue the controversy, do it freely. Examine what I have said in my last letter, and what you find in this that militates against your sentiments. Yield to the force of truth, or shew your ability in shewing what I call truth to be falshood. I hope you will not answer my arguments in the future, as you have done in the letter I have by me. I hope we shall agree to love one another, and to remember each other at the Throne of Grace. You know if you had continued with us, you might have gone to Church as usual: It seems contrary to the spirit of liberty which prevails in these lands, to bind persons to our rules, without giving them incontestible proof of their being right. Wishing you great peace.

I AM,

Your affectionate servant in the Gospel of Christ,

ALEX. KILHAM.

Orphan House, 23d Jan. 1792.

The above is printed from a copy, (hastily taken) of the original letter, which was returned to Mr Kilham, under a cover, in which was wrote in the inside, " Answer, not a fool according to his folly, lest thou also be like unto him." PROV. chap. xxvi. ver. 4.

LETT

L E T T E R VII.

FROM Mr ROB. GREY TO Mr ALEX. KILHAM,

MR ALEX. KILHAM,

I AM perfectly satisfied respecting the contents of my letters, both to yourself and Mr Cownley, but on receiving further information, I know not but it may be my duty to speak a word more on the subject.

I have, in my second letter to Mr Cownley, on the ground of his believing himself called by God (in the beginning of Methodism) to the full work of the Ministry, on the account he gives of his ordination, and the inferences he himself draws therefrom, charged him with want of honesty: First, In not standing forth in conference, and making a declaration of his principles. Secondly, In not withholding his assent to what was contrary to his said principles. Thirdly, In giving his assent thereto with a secret reserve. Fourthly, With having wilfully broke and set aside this his last engagement, and unfairly extenuating his guilt by tugging in the word NEVER, when he knew, in his conscience, the orders of conference are binding for one year only. I did this in a letter sealed up and sent to himself, which I think is conforming exactly to the command of our Saviour, telling my brother his fault between him and me alone. The making it public, is his own act; he had not done so, it might have remained secret till that day when every secret thing shall be brought into judgment. If you had attended to this (as you knew it was a private letter) you would not have exposed your ignorance (not to call it by a worse name) in making many unjust reflections on me, as bringing "charges against his moral character, of pouring out reproach and calumny thereon, of robbing one of the best of men of his character;" with a whole train of severe aspersions,

aspersions, for doing what — when I had not spoke
 one word of the matter to any person living but himself,
 but this is not to be much wondered at, it is much
 of a piece with your logic displayed throughout your
 performance, which containing such dirty work, I do
 not even now mean to defile my fingers by touching it
 farther than in two instances: First, The following
 peremptory assertion, “ It is necessary to inform you
 “ that all your charges against Mr Cownley’s moral
 “ character fall to the ground when it is considered, he
 “ did not in the least prevaricate in sanctioning what
 “ you call the decrees of conference. It was fixed in
 “ conference that the plan should be taken up as Mr
 “ Wesley had left it, without making any particular
 “ alteration; and if any Preacher chose to act contrary
 “ to that plan, he should be accountable to the next
 “ conference for his conduct. Mr Cownley has gone
 “ contrary to the plan, and is to give an account of
 “ himself to the preachers, when they shall meet again.
 “ Mr Cownley has not gone from his word, or in the
 “ least violated his conscience in what he has done.
 Now, Sir, since I wrote to you, the information I have
 received, enableth me to call your veracity in question
 or the veracity of the conference, you in either shame-
 fully misrepresenting their orders, or themselves, in
 publishing falsehoods. Read and blush.

* Q. “ What regulations are necessary for the preser-
 “ vation of our whole economy, as the Rev. Mr Wesley
 “ left it.

“ A. “ Let the three kingdoms be divided into
 “ districts, England into 18, Scotland 2. Ireland 5.”

Q. “ What directions are necessary concerning the
 “ management of the districts.

A. “ The assistant of a circuit shall have authori-
 “ to summon the preachers of his district, who are
 “ full connection, on any critical case, which according
 “ to the best of his judgment, merits such an inter-
 “ ference; and the said preachers, or as many of them
 “ as can attend, shall assemble at the place and time
 “ pointed by the assistant aforesaid, and shall form
 “ a Committee, for the purpose of determining concerning

" the business on which they are called. They shall
 " choose a Chairman for the occasion, and their decision
 " shall be final, till the meeting of the next conference,
 " when the Chairman of the Committee shall lay the
 " minutes of their proceedings before the conference.
 " Provided nevertheless that nothing shall be done by
 " any Committee, contrary to the resolutions of the
 " conference.

Q. " Is it necessary to enter into any engagements in
 " respect to our future plan of economy.

A. " We engage to follow strictly the plan which
 Mr Wesley left us at his death."

This language speaks for itself, I make no comment
 thereon.

In the second instance, are the many aspersions you
 throw out on Mr Wesley, and old Methodism, con-
 sistent with the following declarations:

* " It may be expected that the conference make
 some observations on the death of Mr Wesley, but
 they find themselves utterly inadequate to express
 their ideas and feelings on this awful and affecting
 event.

" Their souls do truly mourn for their great loss,
 and they trust they shall give the most substantial
 proofs of their veneration for the memory of their
 most esteemed Father and Friend, by endeavouring
 with great humility and diffidence, to follow and
 imitate him in doctrine, discipline, and life."

Lord—what is man,

Says

ROB. GREY.

White Cross, Frid. morn. 27th Jan. 1792.

* Extract from Minutes of conference.

L E T T E R VIII.

FROM Mr ALEX. KILHAM TO Mr ROB. GREY

MR ROBERT GREY,

IN my letter to you I treated your character with respect,* and discovered something of that love which belongs to christianity.† Your abusing me, in the manner you have done, rests on your own head, and shows the badness of your heart. You seem determined to hold what you advance, without giving way to the least concessions. You have not in your long quotation invalidated what I advanced before. Till you do that I shall look on your reply, as unworthy of notice. What you have brought forward from the minutes, does not confirm what you wish to establish.‡ When the subject was debated in conference, it was fixed as I told you both in private, and in my first letter. Mr Cowley had a right to show your letters to any persons. Your charges against him are slanders of your own invention which you will have to answer for in the day when you stand before God. You have reason to fear your life will not escape vengeance, if you die in the spirit you now manifest in your conduct.§

It is easy to charge me with ignorance and want of logic, but to overthrow what I have written, is of your power, or the power of any man who holds your sentiments.¶ Are you, Sir, the man, and shall we die with you? Let us have some specimen of your extraordinary understanding, before you leave the world.

* With a little less respect than Mr Wesley's.

† Rather of that wisdom which is from beneath.

‡ The reader will judge for himself.

§ Not so, but as clear as the sun at noon.

¶ Does not this language discover the spirit of a Bonner and a I.

|| Take breath.

show your judgment in exposing the sentiments we hold as vile and unscriptural. Prove them to be so by the law and the testimony. To every sensible man you discover a great want of those qualities, which you suppose me to be destitute of. If you had a little logic, you would endeavour to make a bad cause good, and by sophistry, answer the arguments I advance against the methodists, communicating in the church, but alas your poverty appears to all, you can do nothing but spit out a few very expressions, which are to the disgrace of your name as a christian;* and show, in your treating Mr Cownley and myself, a want of that common civility which may be found almost in the vilest of men.

It is amazing that you should make so much to do about the church, when you find yourself destitute of argument to support your sentiments. I would beg of you as a friend, never to write again on the subject to me, or to any other person until you learn to behave as a man, and as a christian. You expose your ignorance † every one but yourself in your letters. I am apprehensive your heart ‡ will resent what I have said. I hope it will not break love beyond the bounds of moderation. I am heartily sorry for you and all that think as you do. You discover something of the same spirit that was once found in a Bishop Bonner, and a Bishop Laud, but times are altered. If you swayed the scepter in England, we should tremble for liberty of conscience. Wishing you more of the spirit and temper of your profession.

I AM, YOUR'S, &c.

ALEX. KILHAM.

Orphan-House, 27th Jan. 1792.

P. S. As you are so destitute of argument to maintain your cause, would it not be well to look out for the play-
Mr Thompson employed to write Mr Wesley's life, perhaps he would help you a little.§

* Alexander Kilham doth so.

† Both are now at the bar of the Public they will judge.

‡ You have not turned a hair of my face, much less reached my heart.

§ The School for Scandal seems now removed from the play-house to the Orphan-house.

MY PRINCIPAL DESIGN in writing the letters which bear my name, is an attempt to shew that the introducing the Sacraments among the people called Methodists, is altogether unnecessary, because every benefit to be received therefrom, is fully enjoyed by receiving the same as hitherto practised; and because bringing these ordinances into the societies constitutes them a distinct body, and overturns at once the system upon which Methodism was founded, I have remonstrated with Mr Cownley on the part he has acted herein, and I think only with a proper zeal respecting such a momentous affair. I hope my reasoning thereon, and the extract I have produced from the minutes of the last Conference, fully establishes every charge I have made against him, and totally refutes what hath been advanced in reply, so far as respects the merits of the cause, I say the merits of the cause, for all the laboured productions of Mr Kilham, (*vide Letters 4th and 6th*) about wicked Ministers, the worst of sinners, and the *unlawfulness* of receiving in company with such, &c. not being a matter in dispute between Mr Cownley and me, I have nothing to do with it, Mr Kilham having undertaken the defence of his friend, ought to have confined himself to that point only; but as he chose to wander aside from the subject, plunge into a slough, and bewilder himself, I was under no necessity to follow him. I answer his wonderful letter (No. 6) therefore returned unanswered, yet not destitute of either matter or argument, so to do, as he vauntingly supposes. All the outcry made about the *danger* and *unlawfulness* of receiving among sinners, is a mere phantom of the brain, and is evident both Mr Cownley and Mr Kilham thinks so, else are actuated by worse motives. Mr Cownley (*letter 2.*) "you are not required to deviate in the least from the way you judge to be the best, nor
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"pretends to lord it over your conscience." and yet in
 a paper which bears his signature, intitled, "a reply to
 the circular letter from Hull, addressed to the stewards
 and Leaders of the Methodist societies." It is said
 among many other hard things, "are you *clear* in fitting
 down with the worst of sinners at the Lord's Supper."
 Are you, brethren, *justifiable* in eating with such in so
 sacred an ordinance?"—"Those who appear to go with
 the greatest satisfaction, depend more upon what the
 reformers and Mr Wesley has said on the lawfulness of
 partaking, than upon that word that shall *judge* them
 at the last day." Mr Kilham says, (*Letter, No. 6*)
 you know if you had continued with us, you might
 have gone to church as usual." Nevertheless how
 severely does he censure and condemn the practice. I
 think therefore, it is a just inference, that all the out-
 cry made, is either a bugbear to frighten children, or
 otherwise, if they quietly allow persons to continue
 members of the society, whom they believe liveth in an
 habitual transgression of the laws of God, their motives
 are much worse. Does not this connivance destroy all
 the rules of the Society at one blow; may not I justly
 exclaim, Oh! what a fall in Methodism is here. Ah!
 thought to remember perhaps Mr Kilham's intention, by
 nothing me to continue in the connexion is only to lull
 me to a blind security, in order that "*my soul may not*
escape vengeance."
 To wind up this unpleasant business, my judgment
 on the matter is this: The Sacrament of the Lord's
 Supper, consisteth of two parts, the outward part,
 bread and Wine, which the Lord had commanded to be
 received, is all that the most holy minister can distribute.
 The inward part or thing signified, the body and blood
 of Christ, is only given, taken, and eaten after an
 heavenly and spiritual manner. The mean whereby
 the soul receiveth this, is faith; and whosoever approach-
 eth the Table of the Lord by faith, discerning the Lord's
 body, doth most assuredly receive all the benefits of the
 sacred institution, entirely independent of either the
 piety or sinfulness of any other person present, while
 at the same time, whosoever shall eat this bread, and
 drink this cup of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of
 the

the body and blood of the Lord. Therefore instead of judging one another, let every one (as the Apostle exhorteth) examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.

I shall add the last words (which hath come to my hands) Mr Wesley published on the subject, which were written within fifteen months of his death :

" I never had any design of separating from the Church,
 " I have no such design now. I do not believe the
 " Methodists in general design it when I am no more
 " seen. I do, and will do, all that is in my power to
 " prevent such event. Nevertheless, in spite of all that I
 " can do, many of them will separate from it."

" In flat opposition to these, I declare once more, I
 " live and die a member of the Church of England; and
 " that none who regard my judgment or advice, will
 " ever separate from it.

"JOHN WESLEY."

" LONDON, DEC. 11, 1789."

If the steps I have taken prove a means to preserve the system Mr Wesley so happily established, and which hath continued half a century, I shall rejoice, if they do not, I shall have this consolation, that I have done all in my power to prevent a separation.

ROB. GREY.

White Cross, Feb. 18, 1792.



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